

Book Reviews

Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, Muneer Mahmud, and Mustansar Billah (eds.). *Pakistan and Changing Scenario: Regional and Global*. Islamabad: Policy Research Institute, 2008. 166 pages. Price not given.

There are major developments taking place around the globe affecting Pakistan and the region. Pakistan is dealing with various social, cultural and security issues on its internal side. On the other hand, the dynamics of globalisation are also having an impact offering both challenges and opportunities. Taking into consideration the need for an expert discussion on such issues facing Pakistan, the Islamabad Policy Research Institute held a seminar on “Pakistan and Changing Scenario: Regional and Global”. This book contains the research presented in this seminar and is divided into six chapters.

The first chapter in its first paper on “Education in Pakistan: Historical Perspective” reviews various education policies starting with Quaid-i-Azam’s views on education then discusses financing in education and current data on education. The common factors in all these policies were Islamic values, universal primary education, technical education, quality education and national unity. However there was less success in achieving the goals like the integration of madrassa education with mainstream education, the removal of the class barrier between English and Urdu medium students, bridging the rural-urban areas gap and reaching a hundred percent literacy rate.

The second paper on Quality of Education suggests policies to improve the quality of education at all levels. Quality of education at college level requires dissemination of best available knowledge while at university level it moves forward to the creation of new knowledge also. There is a need to establish two world class universities in the country instead of many sub-standard universities and the products of research universities should be brought into academia and research to create new ideas. In the third part of the chapter the paper on “Pedagogy and Public Policy in American Studies” argues that the main task of research institutions is to create new knowledge in their area by setting research as their primary goal and teaching as a second priority.

The paper on “The Jehadi Curriculum—A Prelude to Talibanisation in Pakistan”, in Chapter Two, examined the root causes of Talibanisation in Pakistan in an historical perspective. The author argues that this was done by the interaction between internal and external variables to transform the Afghan refugees into Mujahideen. Further, the jehadi curriculum was introduced in schools and Madrassas by the secret agencies of Pakistan and the US during the Afghan war, thus the culture of de-liberalisation and Talibanisation began to evolve in Pakistan and Afghanistan and gradually developed into a monster. This became the reason for sectarian violence and ultimate terrorism in the country.

The next part of the chapter discusses “Globalisation and the Pakistan economy”. Today Pakistan has emerged as a vibrant economy of South Asia from its backward situation in 1947. Globalisation presents excellent opportunities to Pakistan particularly in its textile sector however there are many obstacles in the way. It depends on our policies that we gain or lose so it calls for a set of reforms and measures to face the challenge.

The third chapter of the book “Constitutional Dynamics: Historical Perspective The Case for Provincial Autonomy” talks about the ancient and modern history of the Indian sub-continent and particularly Sindh. Sindh was the first province in British India that adopted the resolution for an independent Muslim state. Further, the author argues that Hasba bill, Hadood ordinance etc., are in contravention of Quaid’s progressive thoughts and the present constitution of Pakistan has been mutilated in the past. Thus a new constitution based on democratic and secular character for Pakistan is the need of the hour with the characteristics of full provincial autonomy in all respects.

Chapter Four of the book addresses the issue of “Human Trafficking in South Asia and the Indian Factor”. It says that human trafficking in terms of cheap labour, workers for the sex industry and camel jockeys in South Asia has been the source of income for centuries. India, Bangladesh and Nepal are found to be the major source countries for trafficking and the main destination region is the Middle East but many stay within India and Pakistan. Also a large percentage of India’s trafficking occurs internally. Trafficking is strongly linked to poverty besides some other causes such as external migration policies, social attitudes and practices etc., Women and children are the most vulnerable to trafficking. While discussing the case of India the author argues that the government role is not up to the mark in controlling human trafficking.

The second part of the chapter discusses “Pak-Iran Relations in the Changing World Scenario” and says that both countries are permanent partners due to their strategic and geo-political locations. The author argued that Pakistan can play a vital role in decreasing tension between US and Iran as in the emerging circumstances both countries (Iran and Pakistan) are interdependent in terms of their security concerns.

The third paper of the chapter deals with the “Economic Stress on Pakistan in Changing Regional Political Economy”. The author explains that there exist a link between the international economic system, conflict and economic stress on Pakistan. Pakistan’s economic stress is becoming more vulnerable because of the pressures from forces like population growth, resource depletion and poverty.

In the last paper of chapter four “Durand Line: A Pakistani Perspective” has been discussed in detail. The author reveals that the Durand Line Agreement was signed in 1893 and is valid even today. The fact is that a propaganda campaign is going against it because of unawareness about it or because of vested interests of people.

The Chapter Five of the book presents a paper on “Shaping Up the Global Milieu-Role of the West”. The author argues that the strategies of the Bush administration after September 11 were the consequence of a pattern of adjustments in response to crises situations occurred in American history. They availed the opportunity to implement their approaches based on their national interests. Further, European countries like Germany Russia and France strongly condemned American adventurism in Iraq. In the case of Iran America is seeking to isolate Iran whereas Europe is trying to engage Iran to promote reforms.

“Pakistan and Changing Scenario: Regional and Global” perspective is discussed in the last chapter of the book. The author presents the East Asian experience and considers it as a source of inspiration for Pakistan by adopting indigenisation of knowledge. Also, Pakistan can take advantage of its geo-political position to get economic benefits by becoming an energy corridor towards growing Asian economies. At

the same time, Pakistan can keep its relations with the west as well as promoting its “look East” policy.

The book is a collection of multidimensional research papers and provides a deep insight into the major current issues faced by Pakistan and related to its economic progress in a global perspective. It provides an opportunity for further discussion on these issues and the importance of considering them effectively in policymaking for dealing with the changing world scenario.

Nadia Zakir

Pakistan Institute of Development Economics,
Islamabad.